



611 Scott Avenue



# Historic Home Guide

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Founded 1827





# LEGACY

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*Cover Photo: The Main Parade at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, looking northeast, c. 1883.*



*Main facade, 611 Scott Avenue, c. 1950.*

**611 Scott Avenue**

## **Congratulations!**

You have been assigned to one of Fort Leavenworth's beautifully preserved historic homes. As a resident of these quarters, you have an important role in helping to preserve a part of the Army's proud heritage. This *Historic Home Guide* gives you a brief history of your home including some of its famous occupants, identifying historic features, and stewardship guidelines that outline your active role in preservation. As you travel to other assignments, this home guide hopefully will bring back some wonderful memories you experienced at Fort Leavenworth. Living in historic quarters gives residents a first hand experience to be part of America's architectural legacy.



## Fort Leavenworth: An Historical Overview

In response to the nation's westward expansion, Fort Leavenworth was established in 1827 by Colonel Henry Leavenworth as a frontier outpost. In the 1820s, the United States government had become increasingly concerned about protecting the northwest fur trade and developing trade with Santa Fe and decided to establish a military post on the east bank of the Missouri River above St. Louis. It was Col. Leavenworth who selected an elevated site on the west bank of the Missouri, which he believed was more conducive to health and closer to the Santa Fe trade than the east bank. Ft. Leavenworth stands today as one of the oldest and most significant Army posts in the American West.

During the first half of the 19th century (when Fort Leavenworth was headquarters for the first dragoon, 1834-1854), the post protected travelers on the Santa Fe Trail and became a depot for supplies headed for all military posts farther west. Because of its strategic location on the Missouri River near the eastern terminus of both the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails, Fort Leavenworth established an Ordnance Arsenal in accordance with an order by the Secretary of War on May 21, 1860. The post also served as headquarters for numerous military campaigns during the Mexican and Indian Wars. In addition, Ft. Leavenworth policed slave state/free state conflicts throughout the Civil War.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, The Buffalo Soldiers, one of the first regular army units consisting of African-American soldiers, was organized at Fort Leavenworth. Following the post-war years, Fort Leavenworth increased in size and importance when it became Headquarters for the Department of the Missouri and the School of Application for Cavalry and Infantry. In 1881, General Sherman established the School at Fort Leavenworth to address the technological, organizational and tactical changes occurring in warfare. This school was reorganized as a General Service and Staff School in 1901. Throughout the 20th century, officer education has become the post's primary mission. An active post for almost 170 years, Ft. Leavenworth is now the Army's center for advanced tactical education, combat development and training.



## A Brief Look At Fort Leavenworth's Architectural Development

Starting with a simple rectangular parade ground located on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River, Fort Leavenworth spread rapidly to the west, south and southeast as its roles multiplied. Surviving buildings from the pre-Civil War era are clustered on the north and east sides of the Main Parade, the historic heart of Fort Leavenworth. The Main Parade was the site of innumerable drills and inspections and was a gathering place for the early residents of the post. On these grounds representatives of Native American tribes assembled to discuss matters of peace and war, notably the council to end the Pawnee-Delaware War in 1833.

Quarters associated with the Department of the Missouri are found principally on Scott Avenue to the southeast. The U. S. Disciplinary Barracks, north of the main parade, represents the post's role as a national military prison since the 1870s. Many of the support buildings such as barracks, stables and riding halls took permanent form in the northwest and southeast areas of the main post after a large expansion of the Army Service Schools took place in 1903.

The planning of the post in the late 19th and early 20th century demonstrated increasing reliance of the principles of urban landscape design. Small parks were created at strategic points among family quarters and siting of quarters was calculated to achieve picturesque vistas.

In general, the historic domestic architecture of Fort Leavenworth reflects the influence of various periods including French Colonial, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Gothic, Queen Anne and Georgian. While Fort Leavenworth features buildings from these several periods of architecture, it displays far more homogeneity than in civilian communities dating from the same historic eras. With careful planning, the overall development of Fort Leavenworth has retained a most distinctive character.

The importance of preserving the post's architectural heritage was officially recognized in 1966 when Fort Leavenworth was designated a Registered National Historic Landmark. Subsequently, in 1974 a portion of Fort Leavenworth was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. There is currently an effort to expand these National Register boundaries, which will increase the number of historic properties in the National Register district.

*The Main Parade, looking east, 1869.*



# The Army's Objectives in Historic Preservation

Congress has encouraged the Department of Defense to identify and evaluate historically important military quarters and to establish guidelines for the operations, maintenance, repair and renovation of the exterior and interior of those buildings. Each military command recognizes the importance of historic quarters and develops policies designed to protect and maintain them in a fiscally and historically sound manner. The following are general objectives set forth by the Army in order to accomplish these goals:

- ◆ Increase the appreciation of the original or early missions of the post by preserving the interior and exterior of historic family housing.
- ◆ Maintaining the original building features that define the overall historic character.
- ◆ Alterations to original building elements should be approached with caution to avoid damage to important historic features. The Kansas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation must be invited to comment on any project. Comments take 30 to 60 days with no guarantees that the project will be approved. Coordination begins with the Directorate of Public Works (DPW).
- ◆ Ensure that routine work does not alter or destroy historically significant features of buildings.
- ◆ Enhance the most historically significant areas through landscaping and conservation.
- ◆ Ensure that the occupant of each residence respects the value of important architectural elements and that they become sensitive to the overall historic quality of their home.

*Fort Leavenworth preserves more than 160 years of the Army's architectural heritage and history*



*Fort Leavenworth, c. 1858. From an original illustration by H. W. Waugh.*

## Historic Preservation Background

Within its boundaries, Fort Leavenworth preserves more than 160 years of the Army's architectural heritage and history. In recognizing the importance of our Nation's historic sites, Congress has implemented various policies that promote preservation.

Major Federal Acts regarding historic properties include:

- ◆ **The National Historic Sites Act of 1935, P.L. 74-292**  
authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire national historic sites and designate National Historic Landmarks.
- ◆ **National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, P.L. 89-665**  
expanded the National Register of Historic Places to include listings of local, state and regional significance; authorized grants to the states and the National Trust; established protections for National Register properties from federal projects; and created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- ◆ **36 CFR Part 800 Revised and Reissued, Sept. 2, 1986**  
Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires the head of any Federal agency having jurisdiction over a Federal, federally funded, or federally licensed project to take into account the effects of the agency's undertaking on properties included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to approval of an undertaking, the head of any such Federal agency shall afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking.



# Stewardship of Your Historic Home

Historic homes such as yours are not museums; they are the homes of thousands of military families. They also are houses with architectural character and rich histories. By appreciating and preserving your historic quarters, you participate in the ongoing effort by the Department of Defense to preserve a portion of our military legacy.

In order to assure the preservation of Fort Leavenworth's historic properties, the Installation Commander enforces guidelines for the treatment of historic properties that the Secretary of the Interior developed and that senior commanders endorsed. The Installation Commander, as landlord, must make decisions regarding long-term maintenance and routine up-keep. **Your help as a partner with the Army and as a guardian of your historic residence can play a major role in maintaining the integrity of your house, keeping history alive for generations to follow.**

Because of declining resources, ongoing preventative maintenance is the most effective way to preserve and maintain the historic integrity of our historic buildings and decrease the frequency for the need of costly, major repairs. **Early detection of problems and potential problems can often spell the difference between minor maintenance and a major restoration project.** Recognition of these problems will save precious funding resources and damaged, irreplaceable historic materials.

Here are some guidelines to help you preserve your historic home, part of our nation's architectural heritage. It is important to keep in mind that one of your roles as a steward or custodian of this historic resource is to serve as the eyes of the Post Directorate of Public Works. **Please report any problems with the exterior or interior of your home, even if they seem minor!**

1. Be alert for the appearance of new cracks in the building and the opening and closing of old ones, as this may be an early indication of potentially serious trouble in the future.

2. Leaks can introduce water into the walls or floors causing major, long-term damage to historic materials. Once historic fabric is destroyed, it cannot be replaced. In addition, leaks may result in staining of ceilings, walls or the buckling of floor tiles or wall finishes.

3. Check your gutters and downspouts to make sure they are in good order.

4. During the winter months, take precautions to prevent freezing of water lines.

5. Look for overheated electrical outlets, such as burn marks or popping sounds when inserting a plug. Also, a loose plug may cause a fire in the outlet. Report any unusual smells of burning plastic or wire.

6. Don't increase the size of light bulbs in light fixtures as increased heat may cause a fire.

7. Periodically clean light fixtures and other surfaces to prevent accumulations of oily material that can become embedded into fabric.

8. Report broken or cracked windows.

9. Report such findings as falling pieces of brick, stone, or roofing materials, tell-tale wood dust from beetle infestation or lime dust from spalling plaster.

10. Check radiators and make sure all are warm to hot. If a radiator is cold, see if it is turned on; if not, report the situation. A cold pipe can be the sign of an airlock or a leak.

11. Take caution when hanging pictures. Some of the wall surfaces may not support heavy items; damage to the wall and your framed items may result.

12. Do not put any nails or screws into the woodwork.

13. If the fire alarm goes off, leave your home immediately and then call the fire department from a neighbor's residence.

14. Get acquainted with your home before requesting modifications. What seems an inconvenience may be an important element of your home's character defining features.

15. Enjoy your home! Military families have the opportunity to live in some of the best examples of American domestic architecture.

Your assignment to this home at Fort Leavenworth places you in company with a host of distinguished and interesting Americans who lived here on post. You share this common architectural heritage with them all. With your assistance, the legacy embodied in your historic home will be passed on to future generations of Fort Leavenworth soldiers.



**Style:** Vernacular Open Gable with Greek Revival and Italianate elements

**Date of Construction:** c. 1841; extensive modifications in 1857 and c. 1865-1880.

**Overall Dimensions:** Main block: 34 feet x 58 feet; West Wing: 56 feet x 21 feet.

**Structural System:** It has been stated that the nucleus of this residence is a log structure.

**Roof:** Terne metal (historic).

**Exterior:** All elevations are sheathed with clapboard. Walls and trim are painted white.

**Foundations:** The main block features a stone foundation, while the west wing has both stone and concrete block foundations.



*This photograph of 611 Scott Ave. was taken c. 1862-1865, prior to the addition of a full second story.*



*Northeast elevation, 611 Scott Ave., c. 1950.*



# The History and Architectural Significance of Your Historic Home

The residence located at 611 Scott Avenue (Building #5) is one of five existing quarters at Fort Leavenworth that pre-date the Civil War years. Originally constructed c. 1841 as a log structure, 611 Scott Avenue was built by Hiram Rich, the post sutler from 1842 to 1862. Following an 1828 directive of the War Department stipulating that sutlers were responsible for building their house and store if buildings could not be provided by the army, sutler Rich built his store on the east side of what is now Scott Avenue and across the road, he constructed a one and one-half story log residence.

Hiram Rich was the best known of Fort Leavenworth's sutlers, and the fact that he was host to important visitors may give some indication of his position in the army community. In 1854, Leavenworth was temporarily the capital of the Kansas territory and during this period, Governor Reeder frequently "took his meals and lodged" at the sutler's residence.

In 1857, Rich's log home was altered. In general, it was enlarged, a wrap-around porch was added and a west extension was constructed, more than likely, one bay in length. The addition of clapboard siding obscured the log exterior. Stylistically speaking, the original building was transformed into a vernacular Greek Revival residence. After the death of Rich in 1862, the house was purchased by the War Department as a residence for the depot quartermaster. The home did not remain very long with the quartermasters department for shortly after, in 1865, the Headquarters of the Department of the Missouri was moved to Fort Leavenworth and 611 Scott Avenue became the residence of the Commander of the Department.

Subsequently, a second major change to 611 Scott occurred. Although the exact date of this modification is uncertain, it quite possibly took place between 1865 and 1880. Sometime during this period the roof was raised (thereby adding a full story), and the west wing was extended by several bays. The north porch, featuring a series of square Doric columns, and the first story of the south porch of the main block survived from the 1857 remodeling. Undoubtedly due to a penchant for current architectural styles, the new design for 611 Scott Avenue blended elements of the Italianate with existing Greek Revival embellishments.

During the time the Sutler's house was a residence for the Department of the Missouri, many notable military officers resided there including Generals John Schofield, Winfield Hancock, Philip Sheridan and John Pope. The house was used as a residence for the department Commanders until 1874, and then was used as officers quarters until 1904 when the house became the residence of the Post Commander. In 1912, Building #1 again became the Commander's Residence and then 611 Scott avenue became the residence of high-ranking officers. Since 1946, the sutler's house has been the exclusive residence of generals and their families.







611 Scott Ave, c. 1890s.





## Interior Features

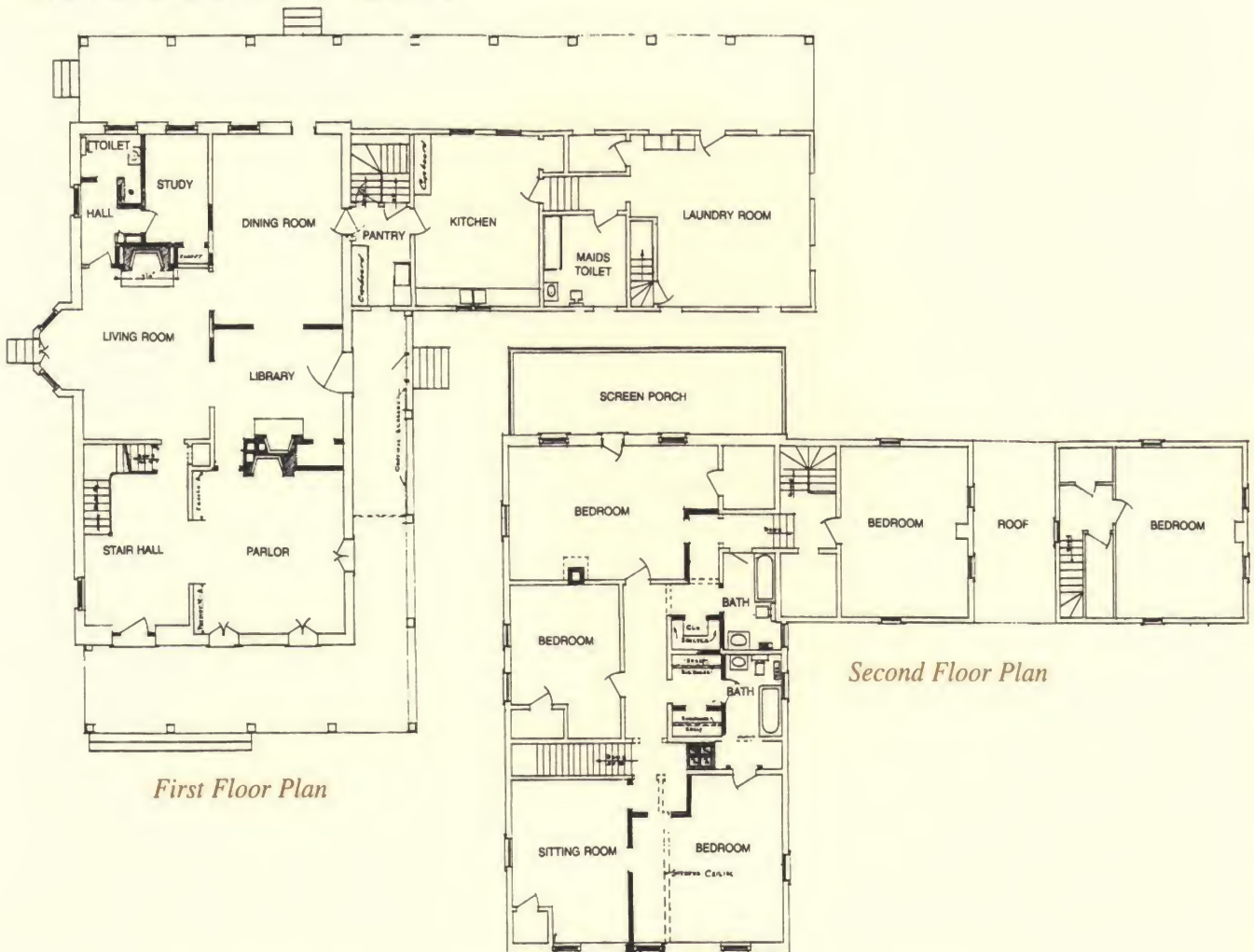
As it stands today, 611 Scott Avenue is an L-shaped design. The main rectangular block runs north and south, while the service wing runs east and west. Although there have been some modifications since the construction of this home, the integrity of the final historic remodeling (c. 1865-1880) remains intact. The interior, as well as the exterior of this home, is in good condition.

Notable interior features of this residence include a quarter-turn, front entry stair with walnut rail and turned newel-post; large French doors at the north end of the parlor; and three red brick and red quarry stone fireplaces with unadorned pine mantels. Ceilings are at least twelve feet high in the main block; approximately nine feet high in the pantry, kitchen, and passage; and about eight feet high in the laundry room.

Walls and ceilings throughout 611 Scott Avenue are smooth-finished plaster and are plain except for picture moldings and eight-inch baseboards. Door hardware, with slight variation, includes rectangular brass plates with beveled edge and plain brass knobs. Few historic light fixtures remain with the exception of a copper base light with frosted globe and grapevine design that appears in several rooms.



*Parlor of 611 Scott Ave., c. 1995.*







*Gen. George Armstrong Custer, c. 1874.*

## General George Armstrong and Elizabeth Bacon Custer

Certainly one of the most unforgettable of Fort Leavenworth's couples was General George Armstrong Custer (1839-1876) and his wife, Elizabeth Bacon Custer (1842-1933). While their permanent place of residence is reported to have been either 8 or 10 Sumner (this fact has not been substantiated), the General and his wife did reside at 611 Scott Avenue for less than a year. Following the public announcement of Custer's court-martial at Fort Leavenworth, General Sheridan offered the Custers the use of "his suite of apartments as long as they desired them." At no sacrifice of comfortable surroundings, they resided at 611 Scott Avenue from December 1867 through the early summer of the following year.

The court-martial of Custer assembled at Fort Leavenworth on September 15, 1867, under special orders from the office of the Commanding General Ulysses S. Grant. On July 15, 1867, Custer had been found absent without leave for desertion and leaving his post during a time when his troops were about to engage with the Indians. According to Col. Brice C. W. Custer, (a great-nephew of Custer), "the court-martial was an obvious attempt by high officials to white-wash the disastrous Hancock expedition in answer to the public's cry for a victim. It was the Hancock expedition that provided Uncle Autie with the Indian experience that motivated Generals Sherman, Sheridan and Sully to ask for this early reinstatement to lead them to victory over the depredating Indians." Nevertheless, Custer was convicted of his crime.

After one month of litigation, General Custer, Lieutenant Colonel 7th U.S. Cavalry, was suspended from rank, command and pay for one year. Custer's wife, Libbie, in writing to a friend, avowed that, " 'the trial had developed into nothing but a plan of persecution for Autie' ."

In June of 1868, General Custer and Libbie left Fort Leavenworth for their hometown of Monroe, Michigan, thirty-five miles south of Detroit. After receiving a telegram urging him to join his regiment against the hostile Indians from Medicine Lodge Creek, Custer reported to General Sheridan on September 30 in Fort Hays, Kansas. He then re-united with his 7th Cavalry regiment southeast of Fort Dodge at the start of the Washita Campaign.



*Elizabeth Bacon Custer, c. 1878.*



# Highlights of Former Residents of 611 Scott Avenue

## Hiram Rich (1799-1862)

The fourth of twelve children, Hiram Rich was born September 21, 1799 in Charlotte, Vermont. From 1822-1830, Rich worked as a trader and grocer in Liberty, Missouri. Rich also served as Clay County treasurer from 1833-1836, at the same time he traded with the Indians and settlers moving west. He married Juliann Wilson in St. Louis on May 6, 1829.

In 1836, Rich and his partner J. V. Thompson of Clay County, Missouri entered into a contract for approximately \$8,000 with the United States government to furnish provisions to the emigrant Pottawatomie Indians (from the Great Lakes area) at the Osage River sub-agency. One year later, Rich was granted a license to trade with the Cheyenne, Arapahos and Sioux Indians on the southern Platte River. At that time, with the help of eleven employees, he continued his pioneer trade.

After fulfilling another contract to trade with all Indians on the Arkansas River in Colorado and Fort Laramie, Wyoming, Rich was appointed the third post sutler at Fort Leavenworth, succeeding his father-in-law, Albert G. Wilson. That same year, in 1841, Rich was appointed postmaster, a position he held, along with that of sutler, until his death in 1862.

In the midst of his career, Rich accompanied Col. Stephen Watts Kearney, commander of the Army of the West, on his Santa Fe Expedition during the Mexican War. The caravan of wagon trains carrying 1500 volunteers left Ft. Leavenworth on June 24, 1846 and arrived in Santa Fe on August 14, just five days before New Mexico surrendered. Kearney and his men remained there until the winter of 1847.

Rich resumed his position as post sutler upon his return to Fort Leavenworth. Once again, he supplied the troops with tobacco, writing paper, candles, nails, gun powder, and pantaloons for the soldier's wives. In the back room of this store, he sold beer and whiskey.

After an interesting and colorful career, Rich passed away on April 28, 1862. He is buried at the Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery. His flat slab tombstone is the only one of its kind located in the cemetery. Two of Rich's six children are buried beside him. Juliann Wilson Rich (1812-1875) and son Hiram, Jr. (1844-1865), are buried at the Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.



*Main stair hall with parlor  
to the right, c. 1995.*



## Glossary

balustrade:	a railing, i. e. found at the edge of a balcony.	preservation:	the process of sustaining a building's existing form, integrity, and materials by stabilization and maintenance.
brackets:	a supporting, projecting (from a wall surface) member.	reconstruction:	the process of accurately recreating a building that no longer exists.
cornice:	any molded projection which crowns the part to which it is attached, such as where the roof meets the exterior wall.	rehabilitation:	the process of returning an historic building to efficient contemporary uses through repairs or alterations, while maintaining the historic character of the property. The features that contribute to its architectural, historical, or cultural significance are retained.
dentils:	an individual unit of a band of small, square, toothlike blocks.	restoration:	the process of returning a dwelling to its appearance at a particular time in history by accurately restoring its historic appearance.
Doric:	one of the five Classical orders characterized, for example, by unembellished capitals and a frieze featuring triglyphs and metopes.	shed roof:	a roof that has only one sloping plane (sometimes called a pent roof).
dormer:	a structure that projects from a roof, usually featuring a window or group of windows.	sill:	the horizontal member, constructed of wood, stone, etc., located, for example, at the bottom of a window frame.
facade:	the exterior face or elevation of a building.	terne metal:	an alloy of lead.
gable:	the triangular position of a wall under the end of a pitched roof.	vernacular:	employing regional or local materials, labor and design.
Greek Revival:	a style of architecture popularized by the English-born architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820). Identifying features of this style, popular from 1825-1860, include square or rounded columns that support a porch, wide cornice, low-pitched gable or hipped roof, and front entry surrounded by sidelights.		
Italianate:	a popular style of architecture from 1840-1885 that began in England and spread to the United States. This form of architectural design, at its simplest, is characterized by low-pitched roofs; tall, narrow windows; wide bracketed eaves.		
lintel:	a horizontal beam over an opening, such as a window or door.		
Open Gable:	a vernacular style of architecture that is characterized by a front-facing gable roof. These structures are two rooms wide and two or more rooms deep.		
pediment:	the triangular gable end of the roof, often filled with sculpture; a triangular surface placed above doors and windows.		



## Suggested Reading

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Engraving of General Henry Leavenworth.



Soldiers and their mounts on the main parade (from a portion of the cover photograph) c. 1883.





**Fort Leavenworth National Historic Landmark District**